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ABSTRACT

This paper describes how preservice teachers at one university are introduced to computer technology in a nonthreatening manner and how they learn to use the World Wide Web to promote cultural pluralism. Students are introduced to computer technology (e.g., word processing, e-mail, and database searching); then they learn how to harness the power of the World Wide Web (WWW) in order to gather information about any topic and actively engage their students with current resources. Students learn to use the WWW to gather information globally to develop an integrated or interdisciplinary thematic unit. Development of the unit will help students learn about the contributions of other cultures, understand other cultures while developing Internet skills, and develop cooperative groups. The unit is also meant to foster pride in ethnicity. It is hoped that the preservice teachers' newly acquired cultural awareness and knowledge will help increase their respect for the diverse student populations which they will eventually be teaching. A pre- and post-test of cultural knowledge will be conducted to determine changes in student awareness. The paper lists web sites that have helped in this consciousness raising process. (Contains 10 references.) (SM)

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Teaching Preservice Teachers to Incorporate the World Wide Web to Promote Respect of Cultural Diversity

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Preservice teachers were introduced to computer technology in a non-threatening manner starting with learning basic computer skills such as e-mail, word processing, and conducting an ERIC search. These preservice teachers are enrolled in ELED 301, Elementary Education Curriculum. The ELED 301 course is the first course in the professional education sequence. There are no assumptions about prior student experience with computer technology. Preservice teachers are required by the department of education and the university to master basic skills of computer literacy.

A class field trip to the university library is scheduled in the early weeks of the semester to familiarize the preservice teachers with the resources that can be accessed through the library. One of the reference librarians conducts an ERIC search demonstration, so preservice teachers can understand this process. For some preservice teachers, this is the first time they have been required to conduct an ERIC search. For other preservice teachers, refinement of skills and new techniques in finding information are emphasized.

After the preservice teachers master the above mentioned skills, harnessing the power of the World Wide Web is the next step in this educational process. It is imperative that preservice teachers be able to gather information about any topic area in order to actively engage their students with current resources. The World Wide Web will be used to gather information globally to develop an integrated or interdisciplinary thematic unit, which will include sections devoted to language arts, science, mathematics, social studies, art, and music. It is a department requirement that all elementary students create some type of a unit, be it an integrated thematic/interdisciplinary unit or a resource unit, to demonstrate their understanding of the process of creating and constructing a curriculum. In this particular class, which is being studied, groups of students construct an integrated or interdisciplinary thematic unit. The class is actively encouraged to form groups to construct the unit. The nature

of the assignment tends to lend itself to group work rather than work done by an individual as indicated by the post class survey findings.

In order to create this unit, curriculum basics such as lesson planning are also being taught. Preservice teachers must learn how to build and create lesson plans. It is also important for preservice teachers to be able to find resources that will help them build and expand upon their own ideas or help them generate ideas for their lesson plans. They must also be able to find ready made resources like lesson plans and be able to critique and modify these existing lesson plans for the preservice teachers particular classroom needs. Internet access brings thousands of lesson plans literally to the doorstep of the preservice teacher. According to Inktomi., a search engine company has noted that the number of web pages has past the billion mark last month (January). Therefore, it is important to develop a working knowledge about not only how to find resources on the Web but to be able to establish realability of content as well. The problem is that not all the content on the Web is reliable. Due to the lack of editing to ensure accuracy, any type of content can and is placed on the Web. These preservice teachers must develop the ability to critique and evaulate the information they have gathered from a Web site for content accuracy. In turn, these preservice teachers will teach their students how to evaulate Web sites for content accuracy. This entire activity encourages higher order thinking skills on the part of both student and teacher.

The development of the unit will serve three educational purposes: 1. learning about the contributions and importance of other cultures, such as Central/South American and Africa, 2. enhancing student knowledge of cultures while developing Internet skills, 3. developing and maintaining cooperative groups. Preservice teachers will be encouraged to recognize that working in cooperative groups requires communication and interpersonal relationship skills.

Because of the university's strong mission statement emphasizing the power of diversity, the integrated thematic unit assignment is also meant to foster pride of ethnicity. The building process of the unit will also acquaint preservice teachers with differing cultures from their own. In some cases the units will foster pride in ethnic heritage. The emphasis is placed upon Africa and Central/South America because the majority of the preservice teachers will eventually teach in a classroom which will contain a culturally diverse population. Many preservice teachers will be dealing with people of different cultures for the first time in their classroom. By preparing preservice teachers to construct an integrated or interdisciplinary thematic unit including effectively using the World Wide Web to gather global information, it is hoped that these would be teachers will develop a more in-depth knowledge base of different cultures which will be represented in their future classrooms. Preservice teachers newly acquired cultural awareness and knowledge will help increase their respect of the diverse student populations which they will eventually be teaching.

The process of developing the integrated or interdisciplinary unit will help preservice teachers to learn about various cultures as well as fostering mastery of computer literacy skills. It is extremely important for preservice teachers to develop research techniques to find pertinent information using the World Wide Web, as it is important for preservice teachers to build upon their own personal knowledge base and recognize how cultural differences will impact their teaching of minority students. It should be noted that the preservice teachers will have a choice in determining a selected culture. However, the areas of geographical study are contained to the locations of Africa, Central or South America. Appropriate topics generated from those areas will be accepted as well, such as the rain forest or the mummification process, with instructor approval needed to proceed in the assignment. The purpose of this activity is to help preservice teachers acknowledge cultural diversity as a classroom strength rather than as a classroom challenge.

With a great influx of immigration, preservice teachers will come in contact with a mixture of cultures. Respect of cultures is discussed at length throughout this course. A basic tenet of constructivist theory, respect of children is discussed, modeled, and demonstrated with various activities within this course.

It is hoped that the preservice teachers newly acquired cultural awareness and knowledge will help increase their respect of the diverse student constituents which they will eventually be teaching. The World Wide Web will be used as a tool to enhance preservice teacher learning about diverse cultures.

According to Howard(1999), there are five key areas of learning in the multicultural educational process which in turn is based upon the multicultural education works of Banks. This investigation will focus on the second area delineated by Howard: to learn about and value cultures different from our own (p.81). A pre and post test of cultural knowledge will be conducted to a small sample size (30) of preservice teachers. Preservice teachers will be informed about the dual purpose of this assignment and will be asked to more thoroughly examine their experiences though a pre test and a post test survey.

"The 1990 Census indicated that one of every four Americans is a person of color. About one out of every three Americans will be a person of color by the turn of the century(Banks,1997)." The Civil Rights Project Report- Resegregation in American Schools by Orfield and Yun (1999) acknowledge that, "... trends suggest that we will face a vast increase in suburban diversity..." However, the would-be teachers will remain predominantly the same, white and female(King, Hollins & Hayman,1997 and Goodlad,1990). According to Melnick and Zeichner(1997), "the problem ...will continue largely to be one educating culturally encapsulated, monolingual white teachers to teach many poor students of color." This diversification is leaving a distinct cultural gap between those who are doing the teaching and those who are doing the learning in both urban and suburban areas. In recognition of this dilemma, Goodwin(1997)

states, "Now, teacher educators are grappling with how multicultural teaching practices can be infused throughout the entire teacher education curriculum." Banks(1997) would concur, with the..."need to help all teachers especially mainstream teachers-acquire the attitudes, skills and knowledge needed to work effectively with students of color." Preservice teachers need to be explicitly trained in multicultural education and in intergroup relations(Banks,1997 and Slavin, 1995). Teachers are perceived as the key to improving the intergroup relations in schools(Stephan, 1999).

This investigation is but one small step to help develop multicultural awareness and respect of diverse populations within a particular teacher education program. This multicultural thread must be woven into all teacher education programs, not just an added course to the existing curriculum (Melnick & Zeichner). Tolerance, understanding, and respect must be models taught by all instructors. The teacher education program is the last place formal schooling takes place for preservice teachers before these would-be teachers have their own classrooms.

The added advantage of using the World Wide Web will enable preservice teachers to accumulate current and up to date information available from the culture itself. There will be no middleman such as a textbook that could be tainted with inherent bias. The bias will be stripped away with direct communication with the culture. Starter activities and web site examples will provide scaffolding to facilitate web usage.

It is hoped that this investigation will increase preservice teacher knowledge about diverse populations. In previous investigations, preservice teachers noted and exhibited new knowledge of cultures, but little if anything was learned of sustained knowledge of the studied cultures or preservice teacher change in stereotypes of diverse populations.

This investigation is still considered a work in progress.

Tolerance and respect of diversity are formidable areas that need to be discussed.

It is important for people to come together and solve problems that arise from understanding and coping with these differences. Every person is a valuable resource that must be utilized for our future. Children are our hope. In them lies the key to social justice and tolerance. Teachers need to be actively involved in this endeavor. But teachers need to be taught skills to deal with the diversity and the challenges it brings to their classrooms. It is important that preservice teachers are trained to deal with the incredible diversity they will face within their classrooms. This diversity should be acknowledged as the gift that it is, rather than another educational problem to deal with. Only with preparation and education can teachers effectively handle the enormous challenge of the gift of diversity.

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Sites that have helped in the Process to Promote Respect of Cultural Diversity and helping our ELED 301 class

This list is by no means a comprehensive listing. We have accessed the following in the past 6 months and have found these sites to be very useful to our project.
We are always looking to update this compilation.

Important web sites:

www.Blackboard.com

Where you will find the On-Line ELED 301 Coursework

Look for ELED301
Check the Announcements Regularly

Important web sites to know:

Start: www.neiu.edu

Go to : http://orion.neiu.edu/~neiulib/websub/webedu.html

Learning the Internet Sites:

LEARN THE NET: www.learnthenet.com/english/main.htm

WebTeacher: www.webteacher.org/

Ozline- Learning with the World Wide Web: www.ozline.com/learning/workshop.html

Finding Information on the Internet: A Tutorial:

www.lib.berkeley.edu/Teaching/Guides/Internet/FindInfo.html

Libraries:
National Library of Education: www.ed.gov/NLE/

The Library of Congress: www.loc.gov/

Search engines:

Google: http://google.com/

AltaVista: http://www.altavista.com/

Fast Search: http://www.alltheweb.com/

HotBot: http://hotbot.lycos.com/

Northern Lights: http://www.northernlight.com/

Metasearch:

Dogpile: www.dogpile.com/index.html

Search directory: Yahoo: http://www.yahoo.com/

Relating to Standards:

Illinois Learning Standards www.isbe.state.il.us/ils/default.html

This is the site that students and teachers can download the Illinois State Standards. These are helpful in constructing lesson plans. The State Board of Education site is also helpful with current information about the new certification laws.

Chicago Public Schools Standards www.cps.k12.il.us/

This site contains the Chicago Public School Standards, which can be downloaded. These standards are helpful in constructing lesson plans. Another helpful site affiliated with CPS is
http://intranet.cps.k12.il.us/Assessments/Ideas_and_Rubrics/ideas_and_rubrics.html

This is the Chicago Public Schools Instructional Intranet Resource for planning, assessment, and communication with other teachers. Teachers can work together online and collaborate on projects as well as learn about topics related to teaching. This particular site has a good explanation of rubrics.

Teacher Resources:

Carrie's Crazy Quilt is a site for educators. Areas listed are sites for educators, fun stuff, central Oregon sites of interest, adoptee and genealogy resources. Just some of the topics this site contains: search engines, general educational resources and Internet in the classroom.
http://www.mtjeff.com/~bodenst/page1.html

One of the sites that I try to check weekly.
Education World: www.education-world.com/

This is a new site find for me.
Ed's Oasis: http://oasis.syr.edu/index.html

This is Bernie Dodge's official Webquest site. Information about what a webquest is and models are provided http://edweb.sdsu.edu/webquest/webquest.html

History/Social Studies for K-12 Teachers by Dennis Boals. This is an incredible resource site. Diversity Sources is the category.
http://www.execpc.com/~dboals/boals.html

The premier site devoted to Middle School. (At least in ELED 301 class opinion)
MiddleWeb's: www.middleweb.com/1stDResources.html

A great site to gather lesson plans
Notes from the Teacher: www.crpc.rice.edu/CRPC/GT/louviere/student.html

Although this is a commercial site, it is a site worth visiting. Scholastic has all types of resources especially a web guide and a section of lesson plans and reproducibles
www.scholastic.com
especially http://teacher.scholastic.com/index.htm

Kathy Schrock's site has moved to the Discovery Channel. This is the site that I refer to first and most often. The organization is wonderful with helpful links provided to many topics.
http://school.discovery.com/schrockguide/index.html

Dr. Vicki and Richard Sharp's site CSU Northridge, sites and curriculum resources
Web Sites and Resources for Teachers: http://www.csun.edu/~vceed009/

Lesson Plans:

Blue Ribbon www.kn.pacbell.com/wired/bluewebn/

The Blue Ribbon site contains a library of learning sites on the Web.It contains web-based: tutorials, activities, projects; Unit and lesson plans, hotlists, other resources, and reference and tools. The students who were constructing a unit on Belize found information here.

ERIC Lesson Plans www.ericsp.org/lesson.html

A wonderful array of lesson plans posted. Students were able to see examples of what a real lesson plan looks like.

AskERIC Lesson Plan Collection: http://ericir.syr.edu/Virtual/Lessons/

Foreign Sources:

BBC Schools Online: www.bbc.co.uk/education/schools/

CNN.com: http://cnn.com/WORLD/americas/

CNN.com: http://cnn.com/WORLD/africa/

Museums:

WWW Virtual Library: Museums around the World: www.icom.org/vlmp/world.html

WWW Virtual Library Museums in the USA: http://www.icom.org/vlmp/usa.html

The DuSable Museum of African American History
DuSable Museum: www.dusablemuseum.org/

The Oriental Institute Museum: http://www-oi.uchicago.edu/OI/default.html

The Exploratorium a Museum of science, art and human perception

The Exploratorium: www.exploratorium.edu/

World Information:

The CIA World Fact Book
www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html

This site's purpose is to stop conflict with education of cultural awareness
www.emulateme.com/

Diversity:

Inter-Links by Dr. Rob Kabacoff, Resources for Diversity is a gem
http://alabanza.com/kabacoff/Inter-Links/

Voice of the Shuttle: Minority Studies Page from UCSB
http://vos.ucsb.edu/shuttle/minority.html

Cultural Heritage Initiative for Community Outreach
www.si.umich.edu/CHICO/LAD/

We rate this site as one of the best to obtain resources about diversity.
Multicultural Pavilion
http://curry.edschool.virginia.edu/go/multicultural/sites1.html

Another impressive site. Database is very user friendly
University of Maryland Diversity Database
www.inform.umd.edu:8080/EdRes/Topic/Diversity/

An important resource to help find resources on diversity
Ethnic Studies at USC
www.usc.edu/isd/archives/ethnicstudies/

Impressive site devoted to information about diversity
Electronic Resources on Diversity
www.scu.edu/SCU/Programs/Diversity/esources.html